



**thank you for
saving my life**

*the universe won't see
us end - IV*

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thank you for saving my life by drakarifire

Series: [the universe won't see us end \[4\]](#)

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Summary:

a stan and richie moment because it's NECESSARY.

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Richie is weighing his options. He's being careful. For the first time in his adult life he's actually taking the time to let the words in his head sit and simmer for a bit. *Shocker.*

Okay, so maybe that's a little over dramatic. He has kept things bottled up, lord knows he's kept a whole Encyclopedia of Eddie related feelings trapped under the floorboards of his consciousness. He's also not a complete dick, despite what his fans would say to the contrary- and especially not towards the six people in this room. He's had moments of quiet wisdom on several occasions with each of these losers.

Sitting on Bill's bed and clinging to him while he cried about Georgie. Swearing he'd help even though he didn't know how or if he even could. Waiting till he was home again to break down because Georgie had been like his little brother too, but Bill needed him to be steady so that's what he did.

Sitting on the floor of his room and listening to Eddie complain about his mother. Watching him pace back and forth, hands waving in exasperation, words so fast they almost slurred together. Knowing, somehow, the difference between the moments when Eddie just needed him to be there and understand and reassure, from those moments when he needed jokes and laughter. Wanting to be gentle and soft, but tackling Eddie to the ground pinning him down even though it made his heart constrict and his blood rush, because Eddie needed him to treat him like a kid, and so that's what he did.

Showing up on Stan's doorstep because he'd called, or just because he could feel it somehow. In the pit of his stomach and the ache in his bones, that he was needed. Kind of like they'd known that Mike needed them before the rock fight. Just a tug that had him standing uncertainly on the Uris' doorstep. Not asking questions as Stan stared at him with strained features and red rimmed eyes before tugging his wrists towards their bikes. He talked nonstop to fill the silence. Mouthing off about nothing while Stan stayed quiet. It felt awkward and uncomfortable and Richie felt like he was invisible sometimes, but eventually Stan would come back from wherever his head took

him and he'd smile. Richie didn't like talking to himself, but Stan needed him to fill the silence until he was ready, and so that's what he did.

Sprawled out on a rock in the quarry, listening to Ben talk about Beverly and understanding deep in his gut what it felt like to look across at someone you loved and not be able to do anything about it. Saying I get it, and feeling something warm in his chest, because Ben would look at him like he knew but he wouldn't ask any questions. Keeping himself hidden, but feeling open, because Ben needed someone to understand all his heart aches, and Richie might have been terrified of himself- but he cracked his ribs open a little and let it air out. Ben needed someone to get it and so that's what he did.

Leaning against a tree in the Barrens with a cigarette between his lips. Beverly's head resting on his shoulder. She had bruises on her arms and she was avoiding the others but she came to Richie because she needed someone not to ask and not to fuss. Someone who'd ignore the shimmer of tears glinting in her eyes from behind plumes of smoke. Richie wanted to ask, he always wanted to ask, but they both know he won't. She needs silence and distractions and loud, boisterous laughter, so that's what he did.

Walking with Mike, standing with him in doorways to places that sneered at his skin. Feeling small but determined in the face of cruel adulthood; fists clenched and jaw tight. Ready to throw punches and insults and accusations at any bad word and dirty threat. Because Mike was kind and beautiful and trustworthy and it wasn't fair that they were both hated for things they couldn't control, but Richie could keep his buried where others can't see it but Mike couldn't. Walking through the Barrens, kicking stones and listening to Mike's fears and his worries. They needed to hear someone say that they'd get out of this town one day, even if they sometimes felt like they'd die tomorrow, and so that's what he did.

The thing he wanted to say was important, but it was something he'd already sworn to himself he wouldn't share, and even now he didn't want to put it out there for his own sake. In fact he had a distinct feeling that he'd probably throw up the second the words came out of his mouth. He'd been ready to carry this burden with him to the grave, but there was something steadily shaking away his resolve.

Stan.

Looking across at the man that had once upon a time been his first real friend, Richie felt something in his chest constrict. They were all so present and in the moment- all of them sinking into each other and laughing, dreaming of the life they were so desperate to build together. They'd found a house to buy and Ben was already starting up negotiations on it, somewhere in Colorado.

It was supposed to be happy, but Stan? Stan was somewhere far away again. He remembered it from when they were kids. The way he seemed to just disconnect all the wires in his head like he couldn't stand how much everything was. Richie could get it in a sense, even though he lacked the ability to just click out like that. He'd envied it sometimes when his limbs felt like they were going to vibrate right out of their sockets.

He'd been a stupid kid, because seeing it now just made him feel cold. It was like his best friend was right there in front of him and he could grab his hands and touch his face, but the part that made him Stan was in another world somewhere. Like he was dead and not dead at the same time.

He didn't know if what he wanted to say would make things better or worse. That's one of the big issues with being called Trashmouth. Most of the shit that made it past his lips only made the world worse.

Ducking his head, he pressed a soft kiss to Eddie's neck. A brief peck, just below his ear to get his attention. "I'm gonna talk to Stan." His voice was low enough so that only Eddie could hear.

Eddie's gaze flicked momentarily in Stan's direction and Richie could tell that he recognized that look too. Enough so that there was a slight frown on his face as he turned his head to look at Richie. "Do you want me to come with you?" And one of his hands moved to brush lightly against Richie's cheek.

"Nah, I got it."

Eddie nodded, giving him a gentle smile, before pulling him into an

equally gentle kiss.

The whole interaction from start to finish made Richie feel warm in every ounce of his body. Down to the atoms. It was so...soft, so endearingly domestic. Like they hadn't lost all that time, like they'd always been just like this. Even though every touch and kiss and whisper of affection was new, it felt ancient and grounding at the same time.

"Okay. we'll be here if you need us." It didn't need to be said but it was comforting to hear anyway.

Unwrapping himself from around Eddie, Richie pushed himself up off the mattresses with some effort. Barely disrupting the flow of conversation as he made his way through the tangle of his friends, before bending to lay a hand on Stan's shoulder. "Hey Stan the Man, come grab a drink with me."

For a moment he wondered if maybe Stan was too far off. Dragged away into the depths of whatever hole his mind liked to conjure for him. Then he blinked, turned his head, and met Richie's eyes with barely there focus. He was remembering the same thing Richie remembered. Their bike rides through the streets where Stan was quiet and Richie decidedly wasn't. It made him lift a hand for Richie to take and pull him up to his feet.

Mike and Bill both watched on in concern, but Eddie pressed a hand to Bill's knee before he could start to get to his feet too.

Richie didn't know what happened after that because his attention was on Stan and guiding him out of the room. Down the stairs and towards the empty bar in the lobby. He was patient and quiet for once in his life as he settled his friend onto a stool and rounded the bar to start pouring him a glass of whatever his hand landed on first. He'd say it was random choice, but their lives didn't have a lot of random choices in it. Gut instinct for a Loser meant something.

"I know when you get like this most of what I say just goes in one ear and out the other, but I'm gonna need you to listen to me this time, okay?" There's something like desperation on his features, he doesn't need a mirror to know it. He can hear it in his voice, see it in the way

his hands are shaking on the countertop. He'd pour himself a drink but he knows how this is going to end and he'd rather not waste good booze like that. Not when it's just going to come churning back up his throat anyway.

For a moment he sees Stanley like he's been seeing them all off and on since they left that gaping hole in the ground. The vacant look of death in his eyes, the sickly gray tint of his skin, the red seeping down from his wrists. It makes him close his eyes and rub at them furiously beneath his glasses.

Fuck.

He knows he can't hold a drink but he wants one now more than anything.

Stan looks at him expectantly and at least, for his part, there's more focus in his eyes. His fingers curling around the glass in front of him a little too tight.

"I'm only going to tell this to you once, and you can't tell any of the others. They don't- they don't need to know. Especially Eddie."

"Rich, I-"

"Promise me Stan. *Please.*"

He needs Stan to understand that there's no room for discussion here. Either Stan promises and keeps that promise or this discussion doesn't happen and whatever benefits it might hold never see the light. Richie doesn't know for sure yet whether or not it will hold any benefits at all, but he's feeling hopeful for once. He knows that his track record in that department isn't the greatest but fuck it. He's got the Losers and he's got Eddie, there has to be a little room for hope somewhere.

Stan seems uncertain and there's even more focus on his face now than there was before. All of it mixing with concern as he takes in every inch of Richie's face like it's going to hold some clue as to what this is about. Richie doesn't know what he sees there, but eventually his shoulders droop a little, and he nods slowly. "Alright Rich, I

promise.”

If that was supposed to grant him any sort of comfort, or make this any easier it didn't. Now that he's standing on the edge of this cliff, staring down at the words he's got to say, he feels too chicken to jump.

That was always his problem. Deep down inside, beneath all the jokes, something in Richie was a coward. Not the kind of coward that couldn't take a baseball bat to a demon clown's face, but the kind of coward that couldn't let anything about themselves see the light.

Figures he'd only kick his giant gay crush on Eddie out of the closet to replace it with something worse.

“Okay.” He said, to no one in particular, and his tongue dragged over the dryness of his lips. “Alright.” He was stalling, but how exactly did he go about all this? His eyes closed for a moment, trying his best to organize his thoughts and putting the words into something that was understandable.

“So I got caught in the deadlights.” The spike of anxiety just saying that one sentence is so strong that it's his turn to detach now. If he is going to say this he needs to not be here. He needs to go into autopilot and let his brain and his mouth do all the essential motor skills without him necessarily being present for any of it. Problem is, he doesn't really know how to pull the plug on himself. Even when his eyes glaze over and he loses focus on the middle distance of the room behind Stan's head, he's still aware of what he's saying and the way each new word makes the tremors in his body that much worse.

“I um...I saw things. Like Bev.” His hand was itching to throw back a drink, but he clenched it on the counter instead. Wishing his nails were a little less blunt if only so he could feel them against his skin. “I um, I saw a lot of things. Things I don't want to talk about...like ever, but something- something that's important. Something I think you should know.” He risks a glance at Stan's face now and he swears that that's the purest look of fear he's ever seen aimed at him. Like he's morphed into the fucking clown.

He flinches. Stan is shooting his drink back like it's a shot even

though it was decidedly more than that. His eyes not even closing, too locked on Richie's face to rip themselves away. Richie isn't even sure he's blinking anymore.

"I um- I shouldn't have asked about, about the-" He gestures at the bandages on Stan's wrists. "I know you said it was okay, but it- I know it wasn't." Stan looks like he's about to say something but Richie holds up a hand to stop him before he does. "No. Listen, I can't. This is really hard man, I can't stop. Just- just whatever you gotta say, wait."

His fingers are shaking so hard that it hurts when he runs them through his hair. He's not gentle, they get tangled and he tugs too hard, but at least it's something. It grounds him down into himself. Makes his body feel less like a repository for all this fucked up bullshit, all these godawful versions of reality that he wants nothing to do with.

"It's hard to explain but, there's all these different versions of us in there, and they're- they're not just what if's Stan. They're real. They happen, m-maybe not here but-" He tries to remember the breathing exercises from all those years ago, the ones that helped Eddie calm down. "Th-there's not a version. Not a single one of those endless universes, where someone doesn't die because you're not there." *Eddie. Eddie. Eddie. Eddie.* He wants to say it, because in most, if not all of those version it's Eddie that dies. It's Eddie that gets his arm ripped off, or his torso impaled. It's Eddie that they leave down in the sewers to rot like he wasn't scared of the dark. Like he deserved to share his tomb with the thing that destroyed their lives.

He can't bring himself to look at Stan right away, so his eyes drop to his hands instead. Watching them strain with how hard they're curled into themselves. "I-I do-don't know if that- if that makes things better or worse. I don't- but fuck Stan. You're so important. You're so fucking *important*."

He's crying and then he's sobbing, and his shoulders are shaking.

He looks up then and Stan's face is contorted with a flood of emotion. The numb emptiness is gone, there's tears streaming down his cheeks, and his shoulders are shaking in an effort to keep the sobs in.

Somehow they're both crying equally as hard but Stan still manages to look almost composed.

"Th-there's one. One that's so close to this one, I can still see it." His eyes closed and his voice is shaking and half broken. Strangled with sobs as he wavers on his feet. "I se-see it every time I look at you guys." He feels Stan's hand laying over his, cautious. "You're not there, so Eddie dies." And when he looks at Stan again he knows that he doesn't have to say it because Stan has always known and he's always understood. The words "and then I did" remain where they will always stay, locked away in a box in another universe where the odds were bad because they weren't the lucky 7.

They gravitate towards each other than. Magnets pulled together until they're clinging to each other and sobbing openly on each other's shoulders. Richie feels hollow and spent, empty on a level that he's not sure he enjoys. Sharing what happened doesn't ease the burden or make him feel any better. He feels like he violated himself somehow. Like he ripped out something that's eventually going to make him bleed out on the floor and he doesn't know what to do with that sensation or what it means for him.

Still, it's what Stan needed, so that's what he did.

"Thanks, Richie." Stan mutters it against his shoulder, his face buried in the crook of his neck. They're both tall but Stan has always been slender and it hasn't changed much in all the years they've spent apart. He looks almost delicate next to Richie, and it makes him gentle as he wraps his arms around his friend's waist.

"I need you to know that you're powerful Stan." His voice was so soft he almost didn't recognize himself. He felt thirteen all over again. Tiny and uncertain, afraid of saying the wrong thing, but knowing that the situation was important. "I need you to know that you're the reason we won. *Together.*"

Stan pulls back first, though not completely. He looks at Richie's face, studying his features, and Richie wishes that Stan was easier to read. He could barely do it when they were kids, but now that their faces are different and they've had years to become a new person, Stan's expressions are alien to him. "Thank you for telling me." He shifts,

placing his hands on Richie's cheeks, just enough to guide him down so he could press a kiss to his forehead.

Richie closes his eyes but doesn't relax, not yet. "Just...remember your promise. Please. Don't tell anyone." He can't open his eyes again because if he does they'll be full of desperation and fear and he can't let Stan know just how bad things are on the inside. He can't let any of them know the extent of the things he saw and felt in that void.

He doesn't need Stan to know that while he and Eddie are right here, right now. Richie still feels like he's *grieving*.

Slowly, Stan coaxes their foreheads together. Richie can feel the brush of fingers in his hair, the light scrape of gauze against the side of his face. "I promise Rich, but only if you promise that if anything happens. If these...these visions get to be too much. That'll you'll tell someone. Even if it's just me."

Richie isn't sure he can make that promise, and so his eyes stay closed for a little longer.

Stan is patient however. Too patient. Like Richie is a rare bird he's waiting to catch a glimpse of. He'll sit and he'll be quiet, and he'll wait for Richie to come back just like Richie waits for him.

Finally, slowly, he opens his eyes again, and he forces himself to nod. "I promise." He says, and he hopes it sounds surer than he feels.

Stan seems to think so because he smiles, and Richie thinks it's beautiful because it's genuine.

They step apart but not out of each other's space. A look of contemplation crossing over his features, his gaze dropping down towards their feet. "I guess- I guess it kind of makes sense. Why I felt like I had to- why I thought I shouldn't come. I-It wasn't me. I remember..." He had to search for the words, head tilting, "I remember feeling so calm. Like, like it was someone else doing everything for me." He breathed out slowly, and Richie instinctively reached for his hand to lace their fingers together.

Jesus, when did he become such a big hand holder?

“All of that- all of it makes sense. It...I think it helps.” He squeezed Richie’s hand, and offered him a smile. “So thank you.”

Richie, shook his head, “No Stan, Thank you. Thank you for saving my life.”

Author's Note:

do you ever just get possessed by the devil and write almost 4000 words when you should be doing literally anything else?